

From: Jeff Knapp
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/25/02 4:16pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Hi,

I just wanted to voice my personal opinion on the Microsoft Settlement.

First off, I am a Macintosh user only. I do not use Microsoft Windows or Intel based hardware. This is as much a philosophical and ethical stance as much as it is also a practical one. The ethical stance is simply one of being very opposed to Microsoft's predatory and unethical business practices. Their whole stance is one of conquer and destroy the competition. The practical reasons are primarily rooted in that Macintosh systems and OS are simply superior products that are more ideally suited for my kind of work (animation and visual effects for video).

Over the years, MS has engaged in finding ways to buy out or quash out any competition including attempts at stamping out Apple Computer (though, not before stealing ideas and innovations Apple comes up with). They did so with Netscape by choking off an important source of revenue to Netscape by giving away for free what Netscape had been charging for - the web browser.

Another tactic Microsoft is currently, actively engaging in now to choke off competition is to build their OS in such a way that it is almost impossible to create competing products for "features" built into Windows. Windows XP has a set of built-in media handlers such as video players (Windows Media Player), music and web browsing. MS has written Windows XP in such a way that it is very difficult for a user to get any competing products such as RealMedia and Apple's QuickTime running well. The same goes with web browsers, Netscape and Opera both are cumbersome to get to run adequately in Windows XP. If you want to play an MP3 file, Microsoft has made it nearly impossible to do so in order to quell the MP3 format as competition to it's own music streaming initiative.

On the internet, Microsoft is making many attempts to impose standards and technologies that run only on the Windows platform. A very good example of this is NBC. Any MSNBC, NBC network or NBC affiliate web site that has any sort of streaming media content will not play on the Macintosh platform even though there is no technical reason for such a limitation, Windows Media Player does work on the Mac after all - and that is what is being used on these web sites. It is apparently, strictly a marketing decision to limit the streaming media to Windows only.

My fear is that unless there is a real resolution that has real teeth in it that Microsoft cannot slither its way around, their conduct will continue to be unchecked, they will continue to do business as they always have. I fear an internet that is closed off to everybody who isn't using Windows. I fear

any other platform being forced to either conform to Microsoft or be put out of business.

Right now, Microsoft has far too much power and control over the computing environment. I find myself having to dig through the morass of Windows only products and services in search of the few Macintosh products out there. Go into any major computer retailer and it is all Windows. The Macintosh retailers are few and far between. Many of the services out on the internet are Windows only primarily because the developer has chosen to use a Microsoft development product that, of course, only supports Windows users. These developers make these choices often out of fear of Microsoft.

No one entity should ever have so much control that they can dictate the market thus, dictate our range of choices. As it is right now, it is getting very close to the point where it is Microsoft's way or no way. This is ethically and morally wrong.

During the whole Anti-trust trial against Microsoft and the very strong judgment against them, I had counted on the Justice Department to do its job and put a stop to Microsoft's predatory and illegal business practices. Then Bush got elected and I knew all of that was over. Microsoft will, at best, get a light slap on the wrist in the form of some consent decree that was so full of loop holes that they would be able to just move on unimpeded.

The so-called proposal Microsoft has put forward is not only the very piece of swiss cheese I feared but, actually has the audacity to include a mechanism that actually increases their stronghold on the computing world by making schools dependent on Microsoft products and services. It's the old marketing strategy of giving away the razor handle for free and making all the money on the blades.

I implore my government to do its job and put a stop - for real - to Microsoft's predatory and opportunistic business practices and to re-level the playing field so real competition can once again exist in the computer platform market.

Thank you for your time,

Jeffrey J. Knapp
jkdigital@jkdigital.com
Www.jkdigital.com